MacArthur Project Proposal
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U.S. First Use Threats and the Construction of Instability

Introduction

In 1972, facing trial for releasing the Pentagon Papers, I wrote in my Introduction to Papers on the War:

> "In my opinion this war, even at this late stage, needs not only to be resisted; it remains to be understood."

In 1986 that statement, and indeed the whole passage below in which that sentence appeared, forms the background for this research proposal, if the words "nuclear arms race" are substituted for "war." In either version, it is hard for me to read this now: to remember the mood of the times in which it was written; to recognize that mood in my associates, and in myself, today.

> "There are some who have been resisting for years, by a variety of means, what they saw clearly as an unjust war, a brutal fraud, a lawless imperial adventure. I deeply respect their courage, their insight, and commitment; I have, belatedly, joined them in spirit and action; indeed, although most Americans do not admire "antiwar activists," polls now indicate that a majority agree with them that the war is morally wrong. But the war persists. Why?
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> Is it simply because the forces maintaining the war are too strong? Too strong, say, to be defeated `quickly': i.e., by seven years of teach-ins and demonstrations, five years of large-scale draft resistance...four years of universal disillusionment...

by an electoral drive...the largest demonstrations yet....the largest action of nonviolent civil disobedience in U.S. history...? Is more of just this opposition what is called for; is it simply too soon to expect an end?

Perhaps. In any case, without each of these forms of protest and resistance, the war might well be even larger and more murderous than it has been. Yet perhaps the failure to end the war reflects not only the undoubtedly great strength of the forces sustaining it, but reflects, as well, the limits and defects of the best current understanding of those forces and of the overall system in which they operate: an inadequate grasp of all the motives and institutions that matter, and of their vulnerabilities to change. That is not so necessarily; but I believe that it is that case. As the war goes on, the meaning of its nature and of its continuance becomes more and more challenging...

I am speaking of the limitations not only of public awareness but of the best analyses by `experts'- -former officials, radical critics, journalists, or academic specialists. No one known to me--and that includes myself--seems to possess as yet an adequate comprehension of the forces, institutions, motives, beliefs, and decisions that have led us as a nation to do what we have done...as long as we have. No one seems to have an understanding fully adequate, that is, either to wage successful opposition against the process or effectively change it; or even adequate to the intellectual challenge of resolving the major puzzles and controversies about the way the process works today and has worked for at least the past quarter-century.

Each failure of political opposition to the war has challenged the adequacy of earlier explanations. Each has suggested the need for a broader, deeper, in this sense more radical, appreciation of the `stalemate machine': the system of factors that support the war process and each other."

The year that the war ended, I returned to a concern with the risks of nuclear war and the nuclear arms race that had been my professional preoccupation in the years before my decade-long involvement with Vietnam. As a high-level consultant, researcher and official my governmental experience in that area had been virtually unique. I had been a top civilian war planner: in 1961 I drafted--virtually to my own specifications, reflecting my prior access and analyses--the Kennedy Administration guidance for the annual operational plan for general nuclear war.

I was an expert in the command and control of nuclear weapons, including delegation of Presidential authority to launch nuclear weapons in crises, and vulnerabilities of the system to unauthorized action. I had participated in the Cuban Missile Crisis as a member of two of the three interagency working groups, and later had spent most of a year studying that crisis as sole researcher, with sensitive clearances, in an interagency study of decision-making in nuclear crises.

Thus I looked at the developments in the arms race and read of new strategies with the eyes of a former war planner and weapons systems analyst. And what I saw as the decade wore on was the emergence on both sides of weapons clearly designed for no other function than to implement contingency plans for preemptive, counterforce first strikes, intended to destroy enemy command and control and enemy missiles before they could be launched, often --like the MX and the SS-18--incapable of surviving, hence deterring or responding to, an attack by the opponent's.

Virtually every development in sight--including those that appeared otherwise to untutored eyes, like cruise missiles--fitted into preemptive strategies that would press each side to be first to launch its weapons in a severe crisis. (And I was aware, from my official research--a major source of data and of insight for this project--that several nuclear crises had already been far more severe than the public or most experts had been allowed to realize). What I saw building was the military environment that had preceded World War I, a world of strategic instability in which a false move could trigger uncontrollable forces with the violence of a great mousetrap.

Only a large public movement, it seemed to me, could avert this process of constructing a catastrophe.

In the last ten years I have missed few opportunities in an active decade to encourage a grassroots movement that could compel

media and politicians to enter a debate on the formulation of nuclear policies. These have ranged from the little-noticed Continental Walk for Nuclear Disarmament in 1976 to the founding meeting of the Mobilization for Survival, the first night on the tracks with what became the Rocky Flats Truth Force, teach-ins on UC campuses for the Nuclear Weapons Labs Conversion Project, the anti-neutron bomb campaign in Holland and Scandinavia, the Green Party in Germany and the antinuclear campaigns in West Europe, original sponsorship of the Bilateral Nuclear Freeze Campaign and later membership on its National Strategy Task Force.

My work of public education has used a wide variety of mediums, including hundreds of campus lectures, college courses and seminars, speeches at rallies, personal lobbying of Congress, testimony at trials--my own and others'--for non-violent civil disobedience, movement meetings, and innumerable interviews.

Meanwhile, the initial work of the movement is done, and its limitations demonstrated. It has combined remarkable success in gaining attention for the issues and changing certain fundamental attitudes with striking lack of success in changing official policies.

It is straightforward to take a principled stand against new, costly and destabilizing weapons, and to protest an Administration refusal to seek arms control agreements that would forestall them. What has been very hard has been to make sense of these policies, to understand and explain convincingly--ideally, to the people administering them as well--why they are what they are, what the concepts and perceptions and interests and institutional forces and practices are that keep them in place in face of massive skepticism: and at the same time to explain why--as I believe--the continuation of the present arms race is not only costly but increasingly dangerous.

It is possible that that explanation was just what a more effective movement required. It seems certain that the movement of which I have been part has so far failed to provide it, which may be a significant part of the reason for its almost total failure to affect the actual programs.

For a decade now I have filled hundreds of notebooks with thoughts and insights and theories about what drives the arms race. At this time it has become clear to me that the major contribution I can make to lowering the risks of nuclear war is to

spend the next few years in intensive research and daily writing.
That is what I intend to do.

As I said in 1972 about the war: "Efforts at better understanding cannot be put off till the triumph of resistance, the end of the war (any more than continued resistance can await a perfect understanding)."

Of course, we have never yet achieved a perfect understanding of the war.

But it is well to remember that the war did end.

[August 18, 2007: What I wrote—quoted above—in the seventh year of a stalemated war in Asia is uncannily applicable today at the end of a fourth year of a stalemated war in the Middle East. It was painful to read it in 1986, knowing as I did then that the earlier war had three more years to go, and that as I had written those words it was on the verge of a major escalation in violence, the spring offensive of 1972. Almost certainly this war has many years to go, I believe many more than the ten that it took to extricate the U.S. from Vietnam. And it may well be on the verge of expanding, to Iran, even this month or next, or (less likely, I believe, though others think more likely) six months from now.

And I think I understand better than I did in 1972 why it was so hard to end the Vietnam War, and why it will be even harder to end the U.S. role in this one. In both cases, as Luke Mitchell has said to me recently, there is fear in politicians of being charged with losing a war, of being weak, unmanly, weak on something: Communism then, "terrorism" now. (Actually, politicians who are choosing this means, war in Iraq, of demonstrating that they are strong, not weak, on terrorism, are greatly *strengthening* terrorism now, in a way that our anti-Communism did not strengthen Communism then, or create dangers of retaliation in our homeland.) But as I hinted then, in questions I raised in a footnote on p. 11 of Papers on the War, that fear is built into our system, I now believe, to serve interests beyond politicians' interests in reelection. Rather, the latter are *harnessed* to serve powerful domestic (or multinational) economic/corporate interests in maintaining an imperial role for the U.S. and its profitable and powerful support structure, the military-industrial (financial, energy) complex.

As I put it in 1972: "I am increasingly convinced of the direct influence on officials' behavior of fears of a McCarthyite 'right-wing backlash' if they should be associated with 'losing Indochina.' But how realistic have those fers been over the last decade? Why do those officials act on them still without testing their reality? And why do they so often act, in addressing the public, to give them greater reality? Whose interests, finally, are served by a policy adapted to those fears and a society organized around them? My recent research has made these further questions seem highly cogent."

What made those questions—which I was not yet ready to answer, even tentatively, then—so cogent was that by 1968-69, let alone 1972, it was very hard to believe that Democratic politicians' fears of right-wing punishment at the polls for leaving Vietnam could be realistic: yet they were still unwilling to take responsibility for ending the war by cutting off funds.

(They didn't do that till *Nixon* withdrew all the troops in early 1973: though to be sure, he did that

only because he foresaw that Congress would cut off all funds, including funds for airpower, in January 1973 if he didn't, especially because of horror at the Christmas bombing. (Whether they really would have done that if Nixon had followed the desires of Haig and others to continue the bombing into January is not clear; but it was a reasonable fear. The antiwar movement *can* be credited with making that a likely congressional move, I think. (The Pentagon Papers? Only as one, not major, element by that time; this was a year and half after they had come out. They *may* have contributed to a public mood that led Nixon and Kissinger sometime in 1971 to be willing to contemplate removing all the troops after the election. But the mood in Congress during the recess bombing, after "peace is at hand," made it immediately imperative to do so. (Haig's belief that more bombing would have led to success—removal of the NVA from South Vietnam—before Congress had cut off funds, seems puerile. Anyway, Nixon wasn't willing to gamble on it.)

In fact, Humphrey was surely right that LBJ could afford to cut losses immediately after the Goldwater debacle in 1964; indeed, that he would be *better* off politically if he did that, perhaps doomed in 1968 if he didn't! So my own emphasis on domestic politics (in my Quagmire Myth paper, written in 1970) looked questionable, or at least, raised new questions, by 1968. It may still have been true that politicians consciously, perhaps by inertia, consciously *feared* domestic political risks of losing a war. But why did they, when the grassroots, by a large majority, wanted out?

Well, for one thing, they feared that a right-wing minority could use the media to charge them with weakness after the event, even if the public had been happy to see them end the war. But why would the media do that? Who would fund the campaign? (Democrats' ending the war was almost surely not going make Republicans popular, by itself. It could have hastened the shift of the Wallace voters to the Republicans. Indeed, at least one factor in Nixon's mind, 1969-72, was concern that if he ended the troop involvement—and perhaps thus led, despite his use of airpower, to the NVA victory he was committed to preventing—that the Wallace voters would not all come to his camp in November, 1972, cutting down or eliminating his landslide even if he still won.) But why this major concern with weakness, fed by the media?

Two hypotheses, now:
1) Imperial policy, in general, is served by maintaining an imperial, militaristic, macho culture, in which patriotism is measured by celebration of our military prowess, superiority, and record of winning. Even if imperialst interests demand cutting losses in a particular conflict, because it hurts those interests worldwide more than it helps, it is important not to endorse the idea of being, ever, a "good loser," or to reward the politicians who realistically—"cravenly," as the culture will say—do the cutting ("and running"). Let them give way to others, "winners," "not quitters," tough guys (like Hillary), who will write off this loss to incompetence or failure of nerve (even if the rulers know that there was no way to win). Don't replace the policy, replace the managers. (See the almost consensual storyline, among both Democrats and Republicans, that "the problem" in Iraq, the reason that there is "now" "no good outcome possible," is earlier incompetence, and refusal of adequate resources. (See, I expect, the movie we are about to see, "No End in Sight.") That is the line to be expected from the Democrats in 2008.

2) (new this afternoon): The military-industrial complex is at worst ambivalent about a stalemated or losing war: because there are lots of profits to be made even in that, and the longer it goes on, the more! In other words, even when global strategic interests are damaged by continuation (as is certainly true in Iraq, and was true at least in terms of missed opportunities in Vietnam) . Thus, fundamental "credibility" in terms of authority, an image of rationality and realism, may be hurting from continuation, despite an initial concern about losing credibility (of violence) if we backed off. Yet, there is this ambivalence: because various corporations are making a lot of money out of the war, however badly it's going. Put it another way: If there were profits to be made in withdrawing comparable to those made in continuing, we would cut losses in a bad situation a lot quicker.

3. Of course, in Iraq, there are not only vast, almost unimaginable (except to oil companies) profits to be made in the long run by controlling Middle East and specifically Iraqi oil, but our imperial stature and influence and security would, apparently, really be set back greatly by (a) leaving the field, withdrawing, (an ominous sign of vulnerability, etc.), and (b) leaving that oil to be controlled by someone else, a situation that might be much worse (analyse) than if we had never gone in and Saddam still controlled the oil.

All these interests are served by building up the fear of a popular backlash among politicians; and by acting to make that fear realistic as much as possible, suppressing any discussion or awareness of alternative, non-imperial policies and their possible benefits, or the costs and dangers of the imperial policies, and by inculcating a culture of militarism in every sphere, education, child upbringing,, media, recreation (for children), movies and TV, churches, as Mike Klare put it a lifetime ago, "the cultural hegemony of militarism." (Not, openly, "imperialism": especially after Iraq. But, "security of terrorism through militarism and surveillance," despite the reality that the militarism makes us increasingly vulnerable to terrorism and precludes reducing it).

But one other factor: Our population is, to say the least, quite vulnerable to manipulation in the direction of militarism. Are we really more vulnerable than others? (other Great Powers, not yet humbled by total defeat in war or loss of our overseas assets)? Or are we just, human? Certainly there is a human tendency in this direction, going back before the "dawn" (sic) of "civilization."

I increasingly do feel that the public (i.e. the majority) is part of the problem: just as I had to conclude earlier about the Executive branch/the President, and then, Congress. And the media. (Increasingly, people say: but I'm not sure that's true, compared to any time earlier). (The 1971-1977 period may have been a temporary aberration. When Hedrick Smith says, to Ehrlich-Goldsmith, that the Pentagon Papers gave the press their manhood, established them as independent of the government, and that this was soon reinforced by Watergate, he is clearly distinguishing that stance from what came later. And, obviously, from what we've had, since at least 1991!

In my Introduction in 1972, I acknowledged that the release of the Pentagon Papers nearly a year earlier had had no dramatic (in fact, perceptible) effect on actual policy, nor did there seem to be a new mobilization of public resistance to the ongoing war (which was just about to get much larger: and could have gotten much larger still. To be fair, the PP and the latent movement as a whole,

contained as it was after May 8 mining, might have kept a lid on, say, nuclear weapons; but probably more importantly, they didn't seem to be necessary.)

I asked (p. 40): "Will the Pentagon Papers in the hands of the public eventually do more? Or is it possible that the American people, too, are part of the problem; that our passivity, fears, obedience weld us, unresisting, into the stalemate machine: that we are the problem for much of the rest of the world?

It is too soon to conclude that. There is too much information to be absorbed from the Pentagon Papers and the disclosures and analyses that are beginning to follow [this proved to be too optimistic; there never were any hearings on the Papers—the Democrats had no desire to expose further the lies and crimes of their own administrations—nor, to my surprise, any magazine articles that went beyond the initial, fast summary observations of the newspapers; no analytical pieces of the sort Neil Sheehan and Hedrick Smith initially wanted, comparing the revelations of the Papers with the actual newspaper accounts and public statements and backgrounders at the time (the newspapers had no more desire to "learn lessons" in public, or private, from their own errors, biases and manipulability, than the Democrats in Congress did; and it took years for major new revelations, especially from the White House, to emerge from FOIA and memoirs; the Papers themselves weren't widely read, by the public or by students];
"too many myths and lies to be unlearned; [there was some of this, but they were forgotten within a few years]; habits too strong to be changed so quickly in a public that has let its sovereignty in foreign affairs atrophy for thirty years.

"Still, one cannot be sure. …Have I , then, simply moved my own pressures from one side to the other of an immovable, inevitable stalemate? [*That* was too pessimistic. Vietnam did end; especially with the help of Nixon's actions against me and the path to his resignation. But the next question is still hanging:] Have I, recently, only imagined an American that 'could'—short of radical change in its own society and politics [of which there is no sign at present, in majority culture]—change itself to *abandon counterinsurgency* in Vietnam and elsewhere, as once I imagined American and Saigon governments that could master it? [There is no evidence, as of August, 2007, for a reassuring answer to that. Chalmers Johnson, in *Nemesis*, gives a definite answer: There is no sign or likelihood of such a popular movement, and without it, no chance of a change in our imperial stance.]

"That is one position on the Left. It could be correct; yet it is a counsel of despair—which I am not ready to accept—with respect to the fate of the people of Indochina… [It *was* possible, short of radical change in our society and culture, to "help Americans free themselves and other victims from our longest war." But there was no oil in Vietnam. Johnson's case is much stronger, that it not possible to do that before the destruction of Iraq and probably other target-states such as Iran. It would *be* a radical change in our culture to cease being and acting like an empire. As EP Thompson said over twenty-five years ago, we (and then, the Soviets) don't have a military-industrial complex. We are a military-industrial complex. That is Chalmers Johnson's message in 2007; and he foresees no change. (There was, of course, truly radical change in the Soviet Union, non-violently and for most, unforeseeably. And it remains hard to predict, especially the future, as Yogi Berra is supposed to have said. On that uncertainty—and on our continued unwillingness to accept

the present reality—our hopes for the future, perhaps any future for humanity, must rest.

Research Proposal

I propose to do research in a number of closely related areas which bear on the motives and strategies that drive and shape U.S. nuclear arms and arms control programs and war planning, from the perspective of high-level managers of national security. I will focus on the particular, little-recognized pattern of U.S. first use nuclear threats in U.S. interventions in the Third World, and the impact of such readiness to threaten or initiate tactical nuclear war on U.S. and Soviet weapons programs, international security, and the likelihood of limited or general nuclear war.

The four areas of research to be considered have several properties in common. They are each highly important, in my judgment, to the questions above, yet they have been almost entirely ignored in most discussions of policy relating to international security. With respect to each of them I happen to have both personal, "inside" experience, by way of past official staffwork or research at a high level--which I propose to draw on as part of my data and use to illuminate other parts--and I have pursued long-term research. Additionally, in each case critically relevant new data have fairly recently become available which yet remain significantly neglected in most analyses.

These related areas of research are:

The nuclear dimension of U.S. intervention policy outside Europe, and the likelihood of U.S. first use of nuclear weapons in the Third World.

The implications of U.S. intervention and first use policy for strategic arms programs and arms control.

The emergence of strategic instability: its causes, its risks, and its potential cure.

The moral and psychological universe of high-level national security managers, as this bears on the risks of nuclear war.

A starting point for my current research in each of these areas will be a body of data that was virtually unknown until my own investigation began a dozen years ago. The data concerns recurrent instances of threats or preparations for first use of nuclear weapons at the Presidential level during international crises.

In 1981 I presented for the first time in print the evidence then available for the following proposition: that every President from Truman to Reagan, with the possible exception of Ford, had felt compelled to consider and prepare, or threaten, imminent U.S. initiation of tactical or strategic nuclear warfare, in the context of an ongoing non-nuclear conflict or crisis.

My article, a preliminary survey and comparative analysis of these cases, and an early statement of my hypotheses on their implications, began:

"The notion common to nearly all Americans that `no nuclear weapons have been used since Nagasaki' is mistaken. It is not the case that U.S. nuclear weapons have simply piled up over the years...unused and unusable, save for the single function of deterring their use against us by the Soviets. Again and again, generally in secret from the American public, U.S. nuclear weapons have been used, for quite different purposes: in the precise way that a gun is used when you point it at someone's head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled."

In the last few years other investigations, some stimulated by this article, have uncovered more instances and considerably more evidence for my generalization, based on newly declassified documents and on interviews of decision-makers. Nevertheless, both the individual cases and the existence of the pattern remain so unfamiliar, even to many highly informed researchers and former officials, and they are so important to the research I propose, that I present my 1981 list here, expanded to include recently reported instances (in brackets):

--Truman's deployment of B-29's, officially described as "atomic-capable", to bases in Britain and Germany at the outset of the Berlin Blockade, June 1948.

--Truman's press conference warning that nuclear weapons were under consideration, the day after marines were surrounded by Chinese Communist troops at the Chosin Reservoir, Korea, November 30, 1950.

--Eisenhower's secret nuclear threats against China, to force and maintain a settlement in Korea, 1953.

--Secretary of State Dulles's secret offer to Prime Minister Bidault of three tactical nuclear weapons in 1954
to relieve the French troops besieged by the Indochinese at Dienbienphu.

--["Diplomatic use of the Bomb" (Nixon's description) to deter Soviet unilateral action against the British and French in the Suez crisis.]

--Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs during the "Lebanon Crisis" in 1958 to prepare to use nuclear weapons, if necessary, to prevent an Iraqi move into the oilfields of Kuwait.

--Eisenhower's secret directive to the Joint Chiefs in 1958 to plan to use nuclear weapons, imminently, against China if the Chinese Communists should attempt to invade the island of Quemoy, occupied by Chiang's troops, a few miles offshore mainland China.

--[Comparable threats made during the 1954 Quemoy crisis.]

--[1959 Berlin Crisis (Nixon)]

--The Berlin Crisis, 1961.

--The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962.

--Numerous "shows of nuclear force" involving demonstrative deployments or alerts--deliberately visible to adversaries and intended as a "nuclear signal"--of forces with a designated role in U.S. plans for strategic nuclear war.,

--Much public discussion in newspapers and in the Senate, of (true) reports that the White House had been advised of the possible necessity of nuclear weapons to defend marines surrounded at Khe Sanh, Vietnam, 1968.

--Nixon's secret threats of massive escalation, including possible use of nuclear weapons, conveyed to the North Vietnamese by Henry Kissinger, 1969-1972.

--[Threats to deter Soviet attack on Chinese nuclear capability, 1969-1970. (Nixon)]

--[Threats and naval deployment to deter Soviet response to possible Chinese intervention against India in the Indo-Pakistani war, 1971 (Nixon)]

--[Nixon puts SAC on high alert in October 1973 to deter the Soviets from intervening with ground forces to separate the combattants in the Arab-Israeli war, by underscoring U.S. threats to oppose them by force and expressing U.S. willingness to risk escalation to all-out nuclear war. Nixon)]

--The Carter Doctrine on the Middle East (January 1980) as explained by Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Assistant Secretary of State William Dyess, and other spokesmen, reaffirmed, in essence, by President Reagan in 1981.

--[Serious White House and JCS consideration of possible imminent use of tactical nuclear weapons if a secret Soviet buildup on the Iranian border led to a Soviet invasion of Iran, followed by expression of warnings to the Soviet Union.] 1

The implications of these cases and the overall pattern, along with other data and

onsiderations, will be explored in relation to the four general areas mentioned above. I now turn to
these, listing some representative questions, hypotheses, and evidence that will be addressed in each.

I. The nuclear dimension of U.S. intervention policy outside Europe, and the likelihood of U.S. first use of nuclear weapons in the Third World.

--How many other "secret nuclear crises" remain to be discovered?

The latest instance, relating to possible use of U.S. nuclear weapons in August 1980, emerged from secrecy just this month in an article in the New York Times which may be the first in that publication ever to mention a pattern of past Presidential threats. As in most past cases, including Nixon's revelations last year, the nuclear dimension of this decision making, confirmed by White House participants, was not mentioned by the President in his memoirs.

--What further evidence can be found on the details of these incidents as a basis for a comparative analysis?

1 See "A Call to Mutiny," Protest and Survive, 1981,: references are given in each case to the open literature, along with extensive quotations. The cases in brackets are cited by Richard Nixon in "A Nation Coming Into Its Own," Time, July 29, 1985. An important case study of the 1973 Middle East alert is presented by Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart in "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: The 1973 Middle East Crisis," International Security, Summer 1982, Vol. 7, No. 1. The August 1980 White House discussion is reported by Richard Halloran in the New York Times, September 2, 1986, based on interviews and an account of the Secretary of Defense and JCS involvement by Benjamin F. Schemmer: "Was the U.S. Ready to Resort to Nuclear Weapons for the Persian Gulf in 1980?", Armed Forces Journal International, September 1986.

--What are the various functions of the extreme secrecy surrounding these episodes? What are its various consequences forthe bureaucratic process of decision making? [This was a specific aspect of my official study of decision making in nuclear crises in 1964, on which I will draw.] What does it reveal about White House perceptions of public attitudes on risk-taking and moral constraints relating to nuclear weapons? What are its implications for the democratic control of foreign and military policy?

--How close has the United States come to executing first use threats in past crises? What is the meaning of "close": how is it usefully measured? How are the intentions of the various Presidents to be understood in these instances? To what extent were any of the preparations or threats "bluffs"? What is the meaning of "bluff"? What risks are associated with such bluffs?

--What does this history reveal about the actions that may be taken to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of threats? What has been the apparent effect of these actions on the

expectations and responses of adversaries and of allies? How reliable are "crisis communications" by means of military deployments and alerts, and what effect do they have on U.S.
commitment and loss of control?

--What are the interests in the Third World that have appeared so vital to American Presidents and high-level decision makers that they have considered launching nuclear weapons to protect these interests?

--What factors in international security condition the likelihood of conflicts in which such threats might arise in the future? Are such threats getting more or less likely? What policies would make them less likely? What factors condition the likelihood that such a threat might be carried out in the future?

--What factors bear on the likelihood that the Soviets might reply to such a first use?

--Has the perceived credibility of U.S. first use threats at various times been a factor in judging the feasibility of U.S. interventions? Has it thereby determined the dimensions of the U.S. sphere of influence, or determined what interests can prudently be perceived as vital?

The implications of U.S. intervention and first use policy for strategic arms programs and arms control. And

III. The emergence of strategic instability: its causes, its risks, and its potential cure.

[Since US adversaries in the Third World have so far all been non-nuclear, consideration of US nuclear first use against them has offered the prospect that it might remain unilateral, and limited to their territory, "safely for the US," in a way that would hardly be imaginable if nuclear weapons were used against Soviet troops, especially in the Soviet Union or Europe, East or West.

But that "safety" remains provisional, because all of these non-nuclear adversaries have also been allies or clients of the Soviet Union, which has had at least the physical capability to provide them with a "nuclear umbrella"--the promise of nuclear retaliation to a nuclear attack against them--since the early Fifties. Consideration of US first use against a Third World adversary has always had to deal with the implicit possibility of a Soviet or Chinese Communist response, either nuclear or a non-nuclear response that would require still further escalation.]

The central hypothesis to be explored is that US policies on nuclear arms and arms control are designed, in part, to support the credibility of threats that the US will, if necessary, initiate nuclear war, essentially to protect US non-nuclear interventionary forces from non-nuclear challenges to their operations in support of US interests overseas.

Theater and strategic nuclear forces, according to this hypothesis, are designed to do this by

enhancing the credibility of US threats to escalate nuclear war--possibly to the level of a strategic preemptive US first strike--if US first-use of nuclear weapons should lead to Soviet retaliation in kind or Soviet escalation.

In an era of relative parity, it is further presumed, adequate credibility that a non-mad leader might carry out threats to escalate to a large-scale strategic attack depends on the plausibility of an incentive to preempt: which depends on a considerable mutual vulnerability to disarming attack and thus a mutual basis for fear that the other may preempt. Thus--in the absence of alternative bases for adequate credibility of threats to escalate to a first strike--a reliance on first use threats to protect US vital interests abroad generates a willingness to tolerate, and even to construct, conditions of increased "instability."

This relatively unfamiliar interpretation can "predict" and explain--demonstrably better, I believe, than any competing hypotheses, a number of which will be also considered--both past and current development and deployment programs in considerable detail, in terms of numbers and qualitative technological characteristics of weapons and basing, and the general nature of US arms control policy, both in terms of proposals offered and accepted, and, perhaps more important, proposals rejected or never advanced by the US Government.

In particular, it can account for an otherwise paradoxical pattern: that programs on both sides appear flagrantly to flaunt the prescriptions for strategic "stability" that were first elaborated in the late `50's and have been regarded as desiderata by consensus among analysts and officials ever since.

---What do U.S. planners see as requirements for deterring the Soviet Union from retaliating to U.S. first use of nuclear weapons? Elements include: characteristics of weapons systems and deployment; announced strategies of escalation; alerts; weapons movements; command and control capabilities; defensive systems; and arms control policies.

--How do these presumed requirements compare to past and current strategic weapons programs? Is there evidence that the requirement of deterring or responding to Soviet retaliation to U.S. first use has been a conscious consideration in programming U.S. strategic forces and the selection and rejection of official U.S. arms control proposals? Is this inferred requirement a good predictor of such policies?

--Is U.S. "strategic superiority" a requirement for the credibility of U.S. first use threats? Or can strategic instability substitute to some degree for an unobtainable "superiority" as a basis for credibility of U.S. first use threats? (That is, as a deterrent to Soviet nuclear retaliation to U.S. nuclear first use.)

--What characteristics of strategic posture on both sides would incline either the U.S. or the Soviet Union to move to an automated launch-on-warning system? Likewise, what conditions would lead to decentralized delegation of authority to use nuclear weapons in crises? [D.E. background comment]

--What characteristics of weapons systems would increase the likelihood of deliberate preemption by either side in a nuclear crisis?

--How is the direction of current weapons programs influenced by these considerations?

--How would the explosion of tactical nuclear weapons (where and how many) bear on the likelihood of preemption?

--What role do decapitation strategies play in U.S. or Soviet preemption planning?

--What arms control proposals would forestall developments that increase the likelihood of launch-on-warning, delegation, or preemption? Are any of them included among current U.S. arms control proposals?

IV. The moral and psychological universe of high-level national security managers, as this bears on the risks of nuclear war.

--In view of the Just War doctrine, in law and Christian ethics, how likely is a President to risk the massacre of non-combatants by first use of nuclear weapons?

--Could a President get such orders carried out? Could he get these planned and prepared? If so: how is this to be explained? What is the practical moral universe of the managers of the U.S. security apparatus, and does it differ coherently from Just War principles? [See evolution of strategic bombing practice in WWII.]

--What is the role of an ethic of obedience and group loyalty? [See the work of Milgram and Kelman.]

--What is the role of a psychology of compliance among the decision-makers and their taffs?

--Under what circumstances might "normal", conscientious national leaders deliberately undertake actions predicted to have a high risk of social and moral catastrophe? [See work of Kahneman and Tversky, and Berman on Lyndon Johnson's escalation in 1965.]

How might these considerations bear on a Presidential decision to undertake first use of nuclear weapons, or to escalate a nuclear conflict?

The method for the further research I propose is primarily reflection and writing. Daily writing, for a prolonged period. There must be reading, and consultation, but reading primarily of the volumes, boxes and drawers of notes and outlines I have already generated. Tapes exist of a a

great many lectures and interviews on the subjects of this research, and transcriptions of many of them would be a worthwhile expense, as aids to new drafting.

But much more is called for than a simple transcription and editing process. The earlier lectures represent highly useful pilot work, as do my notes. In order to develop and relate the hypotheses I have presented above, a great deal of reworking and thinking lies ahead.

I look forward now to the most creative and productive part of the research process. However persuasive my concepts and conclusions seem to me at this moment, I know from experience that more than half of what seems valuable in the product of the typing month by month will represent new conceptions, new formulations, connections and inferences that have emerged in the process of writing.

In emphasizing throughout my discussion above the potential explanatory contribution of the essentially new considerations and data concerning threats, I have perhaps not made it clear enough that I neither seek or propose a single-factor explanation in any of these areas. I am, in fact, well aware of the existence of not just one but several alternative hypotheses on most of the questions considered, each one of which may fit the available facts for that particular phenomenon quite as well as the one on which I have focused.

In explaining strategic programs, for example, well-explored hypotheses range from the pursuit of technological opportunities by the weapons labs to the strategic pursuit of "second-strike damage-limiting insurance," from pressures of Service rivalries and ambitions to bureaucratic inertia, imitation of Soviet initiatives, pursuit of a capability for victory in general war, pursuit of "superiority," or various theories of the requirements of deterring Soviet preemptive attack.

These alternatives are familiar to me from long experience using them heuristically, and none will be ignored in this analysis. Almost surely a number of them are valid simultaneously, in given contexts and at different times, and many phenomena are over-determined. The point of this project is to arrive at the best understanding possible, and to discover and illustrate the merits of adding certain hypotheses to the set to be considered.

In order to understand when and why "immoral" or reckless threats get made and whether they might be carried out, I will explore the intellectual, moral and psychological framework of war planning and crisis decision-making, drawing on my own experience as an insider in these situations, and as an official researcher into crises. I will draw as well on my earlier experience as an
analyst of decision-making under uncertainty and of threat- behavior, along with recent data by social psychologists and psychologists (in particular, Milgram, Kelman, Kahneman and Tversky, Slovic and Lichtenstein), applying these to newly- available data on of two crises involving decisions about escalation, in both of which I was a direct participant : LBJ's decision to escalate in Vietnam, 1965, and JFK's crisis decisions in Cuba.

With respect to the impact of first use threats on the arms race and stability, I will draw mainly on my own experience in evaluating weapons and plans in the light of various criteria,

and, of course, on all available public sources on the nature of the current programs and planning concepts.

The very possibility of a relation between the design and deployment of nuclear weapons systems to be operated by SAC, policy toward underdeveloped countries in Asia or the Middle East has been almost totally ignored or deprecated by most observers, supporters or critics of US foreign and military policy, with the notable exception of some who are now Reagan Administration officials and consultants. The views of the latter, as well as their influence, will get more serious attention from me in this project than they are accustomed to enjoying from their critics.

Some of these, like Paul Nitze and Eugene Rostow, have asserted and analyzed such a relation for a very long period, influencing and--in the light of this hypothesis--illuminating government policy under both Democratic and Republican Presidents. I will analyze Nitze's contributions, in particular, both as a source of hypotheses and insights and as data on the considerations influencing the arms race and war planning. (My own work on the war plans in 1961 was formally done under Nitze, to whom I was a consultant).

Jerry Sanders, whose UC thesis, Peddlers of Crisis, on the Committee for Present Danger (CPD) founded by Nitze and Rostow is an important source in this connection, is a colleague whose insights into current Administration thinking, based partly on recent interviews, are also helpful.

On the current programs and pronouncements of Reagan officials, and their implications for this hypothesis, I have relied heavily in recent years on the work of Christopher Paine and Desmond Ball, along with Charles Schwartz, Michael Klare, John Pike and Howard Morland, both in their writings and in consultation, and I expect to continue.

Paine and Randall Forsberg independently pioneered in addressing the hypothesis I am examining--the only other researchers I know to do so, outside of Reagan circles--and the others mentioned have done important work in applying it to current programs, as have Frank von Hippel and Harold Feiveson. I would look forward to consulting with all of these researchers as closely as possible in this project. Likewise, I have had very useful interaction with Herbert York and Richard Garwin on this approach and would hope to discuss further work with them.

On aspects of command and control and its relation to the risk of uncontrolled escalation, along with the role of preparations for decapitation in first-strike planning, I will continue to consult with Desmond Ball and John Pike, and I hope as well to have discussions with Bruce Blair and Daniel Ford. Although I have cancelled all plans for lecturing in the coming months in order to free time for sustained writing, I have accepted several invitations to address professional seminars and meetings, which should offer extremely fruitful input on certain specific aspects of this project. These include an address to the Western division of the American Philosophical Association on the subject of "Just War, Just Threats, and `Just Terrorism'" and a seminar to the Stanford Decision Theory Seminar, sponsored by Amos Tversky and Kenneth Arrow. I have been consulting with Gregory Kavka on issues of ethical philosophy related to deterrence. Finally, one of the most exciting intellectual prospects ahead for me is the opportunity to work closely with Tversky and

Kahneman (who has just moved to Berkeley) in developing their empirical work on decision making under uncertainty, and applying it to political phenomena.

A Note on Significance

The first import of this project, its very starting point, is to focus attention upon a generally-unimagined danger in the nuclear era: the real possibility that nuclear weapons will explode upon humans in a Third World country because an American President has deliberately chosen, in what he perceives as a desperate situation, to initiate tactical nuclear war. Whatever anyone might think about the fitness of that decision or the policy that led up to it, one can only receive the news of that prospect as a frightening addition to the risks of our time.

There are experts today who believe that analyses of stability are outmoded in their ominous inferences, because with the current level of nuclear warheads on both sides, they cannot imagine circumstances under which a sane leader would pursue the hypothetical advantages that his strategic "damaging-limiting" forces have supposedly bought for him. But these systems have not been tested in the crucible of a limited nuclear war. And these experts, I have found in discussion, have not considered the likelihood--in the light of the hidden history of nuclear crises-- that such a war might actually occur by decision of an American President.

Contemplation of these possibiltiies, I judge from my own experience, leads to a very increased sense of urgency about stopping, either by unilateral initiative or bilateral negotiation, the new destabilizing weapons developments. For arms control, an entirely new framework for negotiations is implied, focusing on the characteristics of weapons, including accuracy and deployment, rather than on numbers. The short-run criterion of stability would put great premium on totally averting the testing or deployment of whole new types of weapons systems that encourage preemption, delegation, or launch on warning approaches.

[To reduce the risk of nuclear war, either limited or all- out, it is more important than most have realized to reexamine, reevaluate, and modify--perhaps first bringing under more democratic control--US interrelationships and mutual dependence with regimes, resources and people in the Third World; US foreign and interventionary policies; US first-use policy in the Third World as well as Europe; and the linkages between all of these and US strategic nuclear forces:

threats of escalation and weapons programs.

[Material in brackets above and on page 10 was added after submission of the proposal on September 30.]

[EXTRA FOOTNOTE TEXT--delete later]:

*****"Call to Mutiny," Protest and Survive, New York, 1981: references in each case to the open literature are given, along with extensive quotations. The cases in brackets are cited by Richard Nixon in "A Nation Coming Into Its Own," Time, July 29, 1985. An important case study of the 1973 Middle East alert is presented by Barry Blechman and Douglas Hart in "The Political Utility of Nuclear Weapons: The 1973 Middle East Crisis," International Security, Summer 1982, Vol. 7, No. 1. The August 1980 White House discussion is reported by Richard Halloran in the New York Times, September 2, 1986, based on interviews and an account of the Secretary of Defense and JCS involvement by Benjamin F. Schemmer, "Was the U.S. Ready to Resort to Nuclear Weapons for the Persian Gulf in 1980?", Armed Forces Journal International, September 1986.